



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

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IOWA 2004 DRINKING WATER COMPLIANCE REPORT AVAILABLE

DES MOINES — No waterborne diseases or deaths were reported from Iowa public drinking water supplies in 2004, according to an annual DNR compliance report.

Looking at the statistics, 2004 was a somewhat typical year for Iowa's public drinking water supplies. However, new federal regulations led to more requirements of both the water system operators and the state oversight staff.

“Overall, the public water supplies in Iowa are serving safe water. However, there is room for improvement,” said Dennis Alt, supervisor of the DNR's water supply engineering section. “We saw an increase in both the number of violations of acute contaminants and the number of systems with those violations when compared with the previous year, which is not the direction we want to head.”

Contaminants in Iowa which can cause an immediate health risk are coliform bacteria from a fecal source (a risk to people that are elderly, very young, or with compromised immunological systems), and nitrate and nitrite (a risk to infants under 6 months of age and possibly pregnant women).

“The good news is that we also had more systems meeting their sampling requirements,” Alt said. “It is a sign of the qualified and dedicated water system operators and state drinking water staff that Iowa systems had relatively few of these violations.”

These are some of the report’s highlights:

- Almost 90 percent of Iowa’s 2,060 regulated public water supplies met all health-based standards.
- Over 88 percent of the population served by Iowa’s public water systems received water that was in compliance with all health-based standards.
- The 357 health-based standard violations at 208 public water supplies were of the following contaminants: non-fecal coliform bacteria (58 percent), nitrate (12 percent), total trihalomethanes (8 percent), copper (6 percent), fecal coliform bacteria (5 percent), lead (4 percent), and other contaminants (8 percent: arsenic, fluoride, gross alpha radionuclides, nitrite, radium 226 and 228, turbidity, and uranium).
- Major monitoring and reporting requirements were met by almost 82 percent of Iowa’s public water supply systems. Of the 848 violations, coliform bacteria and nitrate monitoring violations were the most prevalent (63 percent).
- The requirement for all of the 1,155 community public water supply systems to compile and distribute an annual consumer confidence report to their customers was met by over 98 percent of the systems.

The Safe Drinking Water Act requires the State of Iowa to publish this annual report of the status of its drinking water program. The “Iowa Public Drinking Water Program 2004 Annual Compliance Report” has been distributed to the Environmental Protection Commission, Governor’s Office, Iowa Legislature and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The report is available on the DNR’s Web site at www.iowadnr.com/water/drinking/reports.html. It is also available by contacting the Water Supply Engineering and Operations Sections, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 401 SW 7th St., Suite M, Des Moines, IA 50309-4611 or by calling (515) 725-0282.

For more information, contact Dennis Alt at (515) 725-0275.

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DNR RECOGNIZES LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION IN NATURAL RESOURCES

DES MOINES — Iowa businesses, organizations and individuals are invited to apply for the 2005 Governor’s Iowa Environmental Excellence Awards. This premier environmental awards program, sponsored by Governor Vilsack and the State of Iowa, recognizes leadership and innovation in the protection of Iowa’s water, land and air.

“Our natural resources are one of our state’s greatest treasures,” said Jeff Vonk, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “We are honored to recognize those Iowans who work to protect and enhance the environment.”

Awards will be given for overall environmental excellence and special recognition in water quality, waste management, energy efficiency/renewable energy, air quality and habitat restoration/development.

Categories for the awards include:

- Agriculture (operation, farm or other ag-related business or organization)
- Community/Local Government
- Small Business or Industry (up to 200 employees)
- Large Business or Industry (more than 200 employees)
- Institution/Public Sector Facility (hospital, college, school, etc.)
- Service/Civic/Nonprofit Organization (Kiwanis, Lions Club, Pheasants Forever, etc.)

The awards are sponsored by the Governor's Office, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Iowa Department of Economic Development, the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center.

The application deadline is Nov. 4, 2005. To obtain an application, visit www.iowadnr.com/other/ee/index.html, or contact: Jill Cornell, Department of Natural Resources (515) 281-0879; e-mail: Jill.Cornell@dnr.state.ia.us.

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DESIGN RULES FOR OPEN FEEDLOTS NOW AVAILABLE

DES MOINES – The Environmental Protection Commission approved new design rules for the construction of open feedlots on Aug. 15.

The rules passed on an emergency basis so that open feedlot producers who are anxious to construct this fall will have design standards to use, said Gene Tinker, coordinator of animal feeding operations for the DNR.

“This is particularly important for those producers who plan to use alternative technologies and need a construction permit,” he said. “Without adopting these rules on an emergency basis, they would not have had any design standards.”

Tinker said that more than 100 producers who are participating in the Iowa Plan for Open Feedlots and need a construction permit could also benefit from the rules. The standards will allow these producers to meet both state and federal requirements.

“The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has expressed concern about a lack of enforcement on open feedlots,” he said. “These rules will provide some validity to construction permits issued by the DNR, particularly for building alternative technologies.”

Alternative technologies include site-specific designs for vegetated treatment areas and other means of treating the runoff from open feedlots after solid manure has been settled out.

Tinker said he would encourage producers to work closely with design engineers so that designs accommodate individual management styles. “The success of these systems is highly dependent on how well the producer can work with the design, construction and management of the systems,” Tinker added.

For example, producers should consider actual cropping practices and management during the design stage. Because of Iowa’s spring and fall rains, producers need to be certain that they have adequate land application fields available.

The DNR will also proceed with the normal rulemaking process, so that producers and other stakeholders will have a chance to provide public input on the rules.

For more information, contact Gene Tinker at (515) 281-3103.

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MANURE STOCKPILING REGULATED UNDER NEW DNR RULES

DES MOINES – New rules for open feedlots prohibit manure stockpiles in locations that would affect state waters.

“Livestock producers shouldn’t be afraid of this rule,” said Gene Tinker, coordinator of animal feeding operations for the DNR. “It’s basically a common sense rule that requires manure stockpiles to be placed away from streams and other locations that could carry manure or manure-contaminated waste to a stream.”

The new rule requires producers to avoid grassed waterways, roadsides or stream edges that might carry uncovered manure right into a stream. Stockpiles within 200 feet of a drainage tile intake must be located downgradient of the intake.

Specific set-back distances require stockpiles to be located at least 200 feet from a known sinkhole, cistern, abandoned well, unplugged agricultural drainage well, agricultural drainage well surface tile inlet, drinking water well, a designated wetland, lake or water source.

“The exception to this setback is when a 50-foot wide vegetated buffer strip is placed around the sensitive area and the stockpile is located outside that buffer,” said Tinker.

Stockpiles also need to be set back at least 800 feet from high quality water resources such as trout streams and many other quality lakes and streams. A list of high quality water resources is available on the DNR Web site at www.iowadnr.com under animal feeding operations.

For more information, contact Gene Tinker at (515) 281-3103.

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HEAVY RAINFALL LEADS TO MAYNARD BYPASS

MAYNARD — An estimated 12,000 gallons of raw diluted wastewater bypassed to the Little Volga River Thursday morning following a heavy rainfall.

The city of Maynard received about four inches of rain during a short time Thursday. The city's bypass pumps automatically activated and pumped wastewater to the river for about 15 minutes to keep sewage from backing up into basements.

With additional heavy rains, other towns across northeast Iowa may need to discharge from their wastewater storage cells to protect the integrity of the structures. Because these discharges would come before the normal fall discharge period, wastewater treatment facilities would only be allowed to discharge a minimum amount of wastewater.

For more information, contact Mike Wade at (563) 927-2640.

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BLOCKED SEWER LINE LEADS TO DUBUQUE BYPASS

DUBUQUE — A blockage in a Dubuque sanitary sewer line, paired with heavy rains, led to a bypass of approximately 200 gallons of wastewater Thursday morning.

The wastewater discharge, located at 780 West Locust St., was discovered at approximately 8 a.m. and was stopped by 9:30 a.m. The wastewater flowed into a storm sewer that leads to the Mississippi River.

The city has disinfected the area of the bypass.

The DNR will continue to evaluate the situation, including other recent bypasses throughout Dubuque.

For more information, contact Mike Wade at (563) 927-2640.

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DNR INVESTIGATES FISH KILLS IN NORTHEAST IOWA

MANCHESTER – The DNR investigated two small fish kills recently in northeast Iowa, but did not find definitive causes for either one.

“I would ask people to report a fish kill as soon as possible,” said Clark Ott, an environmental specialist at the Manchester DNR field office. “That will increase our chances of tracking down the cause of the problem.”

On Aug. 12, the DNR investigated a small fish kill in John's Creek south of Farley and found a few dead suckers, chubs and minnows. After checking a nearby farmstead and recently treated gravel road as sources, the DNR concluded that the fish kill may have been caused by a lightning strike during a heavy rainstorm on Thursday night or by a combination of storm runoff from several sources.

"This serves as a reminder to people to be careful," Ott said. "Anything that you put out on the ground can eventually reach a stream and our waters."

On Aug. 14, a small fish kill was reported in Walker. DNR investigators found about 15 dead minnows in Blue Creek on the south side of the town. They also found many live fish and good water quality in most areas of the creek.

After on-site inspections and water tests at storm water outfalls, industrial sites and city area, the DNR found elevated ammonia levels at one of the storm water outlets. The DNR could not determine if the ammonia was the source of the fish kill. As a preventative measure, the DNR required an industrial site drained by the storm water outlet to flush and pump out any contaminated water still in the storm water pipe.

The DNR ruled out runoff from the city's wastewater treatment plant as a pollutant source.

Investigators speculated that rainfall may have washed some pollutants into the stream, but they were unable to determine the precise source of the fish kill.

Ott said that reporting fish kills as soon as they occur can help the DNR locate the pollutant source and prevent contamination from spreading.

For more information, contact Clark Ott at (563) 927-2640.

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DNR LAUNCHES EMPLOYMENT WEB PAGE

DES MOINES – The DNR has developed a new Web page to serve current employees and aid in the recruitment of new employees.

"I'm very excited about this page, as we showcase DNR staff people and their commitment to caring for Iowa's natural resources," said Liz Christiansen, deputy director of the DNR.

"We hope this page will encourage people from all cultures, talents and backgrounds to choose a career with our agency," she added. "We are looking for people who want to make a difference in our environment and our natural resources."

Christiansen added that the DNR seeks team players who are productive and accountable. “Choosing a career in public service also requires a customer-service orientation,” she added. “We serve not just the resources of Iowa, but also the people.”

The DNR offers many benefits including training opportunities, flexible schedules that can accommodate families, prospects for career advancement, and a casual, but professional atmosphere.

The new employment Web page at www.iowadnr.com/employment/ includes profiles of current employees and the important work that they do. It also has links for people who are interested in permanent and temporary job openings. Information about benefits, training and policy can be found through easy links to the Department of Personnel.

“The DNR is committed to having a diverse workforce that is representative of the people of Iowa,” Christiansen said. “We are looking for talented, dedicated people who can help Iowans care for our natural resources from the Mississippi to the Missouri Rivers.”

From energy to water resources, bedrock geology to air, landfills to parks, fisheries, forests and wildlife, DNR employees spend their days caring for the resources of Iowa.

For more information, contact Jane Mild with workforce planning at (515) 242-6004.